



ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ALERTS CONSUMERS TO DIGITAL TV CONVERSION

PUBLIC ADVOCATE ADVISORY: January 23, 2008

(Anchorage, AK) On January 1, 2008, the nation-wide transition from analog to digital television began. As authorized by federal legislation, all US households will now be eligible to request two \$40 coupons to be used toward the purchase of digital to analog converter boxes. Without a converter, analog TV sets will no longer be able to receive TV signals once digital broadcasting begins in February 2009.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has encouraged all interested persons, including the Alaska Attorney General's office under the direction of Attorney General Talis Colberg, who serves as the public advocate for regulatory matters, to distribute information to the public regarding the impacts of the digital conversion.

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Service (NTIA) launched the coupon program, as authorized by the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005. On February 17, 2009, American television stations are required to switch to digital format, and they will no longer be offering "free" analog channel reception. Televisions that are currently using antennas are probably analog and thus will be unable to receive signals once digital broadcasting begins in 2009.

The switch to digital format reportedly will offer a clearer picture and better sound quality. Because it is more efficient, digital format will also free-up airwave spectrum for planned use by emergency first-responders and for public auction for the commercial provision of innovative wireless broadband services to consumers.

After February 17, 2009, consumers will have three options for receiving television signals: purchase a digital TV set, subscribe to a digital TV provider (e.g. local cable, satellite, or pay television service), or purchase a digital converter box for their analog set from a local electronics dealer.

The NTIA administers the coupon program for those who choose to purchase a digital converter box. Each household is eligible to receive two free coupons, each worth \$40, to be presented at the point of sale toward the purchase price of two converter boxes. The NTIA will publish a list of eligible converters and participating retailers on its website,

www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon/. Converter box coupons can also be requested by calling toll-free 1-888-388-2009. The coupons expire 90 days after they are issued.

The digital converters will allow an analog TV to receive over-the-air broadcast reception after February 2009, but the converters will not enable an analog TV to display high-definition resolution.

For more information, please contact Daniel Patrick O'Tierney, Chief Assistant Attorney General for Regulatory Affairs & Public Advocacy (RAPA) at (907) 269-5100.

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